

Applications of the Reggio Emilia Approach to U. S. Early Childhood Education Classroom

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Solutions
to the Dropout Crisis

Key Concepts of the Reggio Emilia Approach

- The child is a capable learner with great potential for thought and creativity.
- Children express themselves through “a hundred languages” —in diverse voices and ways.
- Relationships within the Reggio Emilia schools are critical to creating a positive environment.



Key Concepts of the Reggio Emilia Approach

- Teachers, parents, and children work together collaboratively and as co-investigators.
- The arts are integrated throughout the curriculum.
- Documentation is elaborate and takes on many avenues: photography, portfolios, oral and written expression, and products made by the children.



History of the Reggio Emilia Schools of Northern Italy

- Began after WWII in the city of Reggio Emilia, Italy, north of Milan. Built with proceeds from the sale of a tank, trucks, and some horses.
- Dr. Loris Malaguzzi and a group of parents conceived the new schools for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.
- Existential beginning to help the Reggio Emilia community rebuild from the ashes of the war. Gave hope to the surviving families.



- Based on theories of Dewey, Piaget, Vygotsky, Gardner, and others.
- Constructivist approach in which children are empowered and encouraged to explore their world and create meanings.
- The schools are closely integrated into the community and supported financially by the city



Descriptors of the Programs

- Infant/toddler centers for children birth to age three
- Preschools for children age three to six (kindergartens)
- Education and care are considered necessary to provide a high-quality, full-day program.



Descriptors of the Programs

- Children from all SES levels are included, with an emphasis on children with special needs.
- Combines the social services with education, an approach widely accepted in Italy.
- In Reggio Emilia, 95% of preschool-age children are enrolled in school.



Growth in the United States

- The Reggio Emilia Approach was brought to the U. S. in the early 1990s by NAEYC and the University of Massachusetts.
- The approach is influencing many early childhood programs in the U. S. but is not seen as a model to be replicated.
- Some key concepts of Reggio Emilia originated in the U. S. and are familiar to U.S. educators.



Specific Applications to US Schools

- View of the child as a learner
- Staff development is more systematic and collaborative
- Cooperation is seen as the foundation of learning; relationships are a focal point



Specific Applications to US Schools

- Parent involvement is more integrated and in-depth.
- Documentation of children's work is becoming more elaborate and diverse.
- Project Work encourages in-depth exploration of fewer topics.



- Integration of the arts throughout

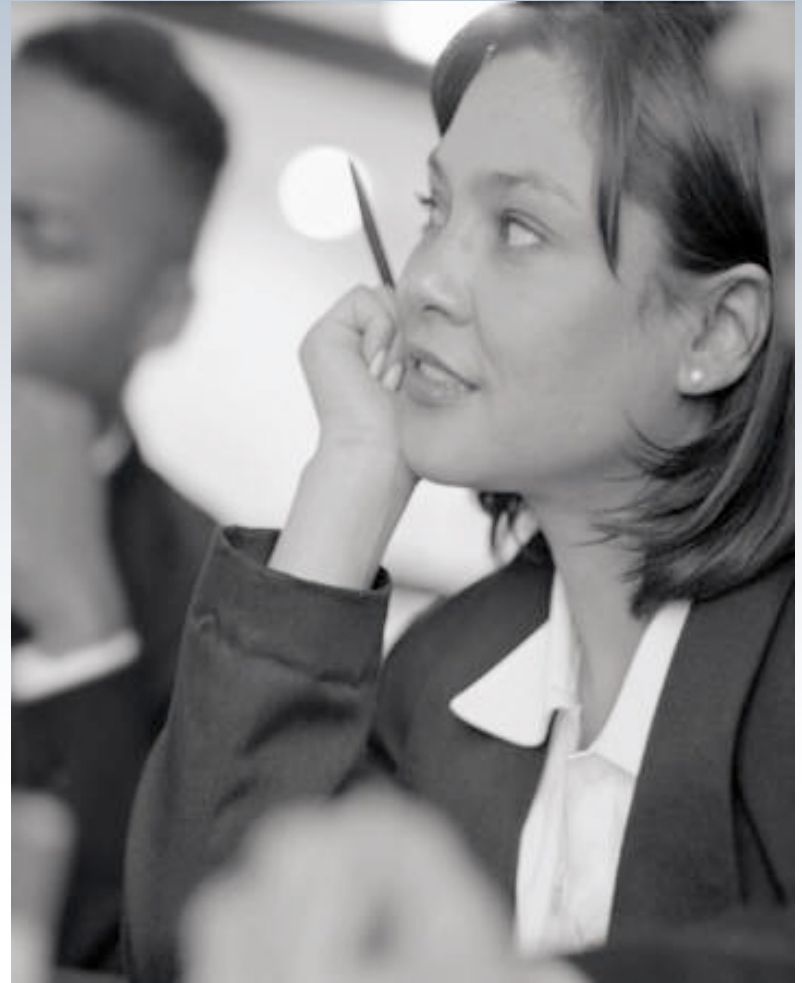
View of the Child as a Learner

- Viewed as highly competent
- Child needs individualized pacing of learning
- Appreciation of the unique interests and skills of each child



Staff Development

- Egalitarian roles of teachers
- Planned and regular staff development in the schools
- Relationships are very important



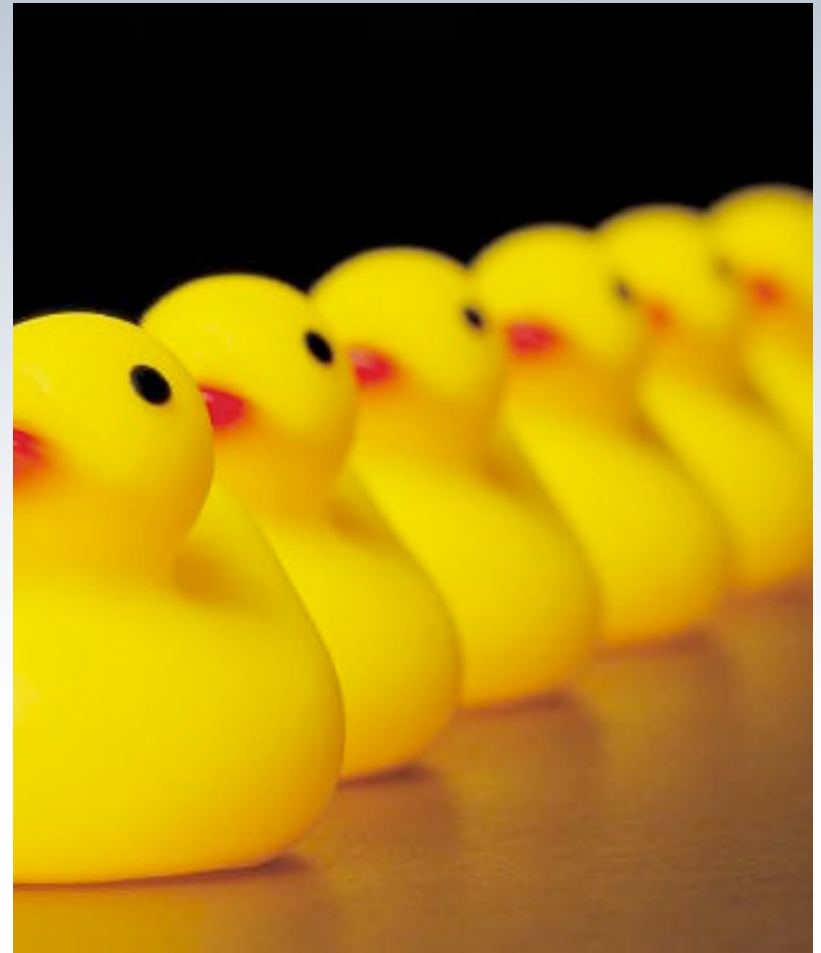
Project Work

- Learning is best when reflective and in-depth
- Project work engages all children in small and individual group work
- Projects are displayed and used for assessment purposes
- Projects stem from the children's interests



Documentation of Children's Work

- Technology is used to capture the learning process
- Digital photographs used extensively
- Sequential photos to capture a process
- Portfolios and panels displayed in classrooms



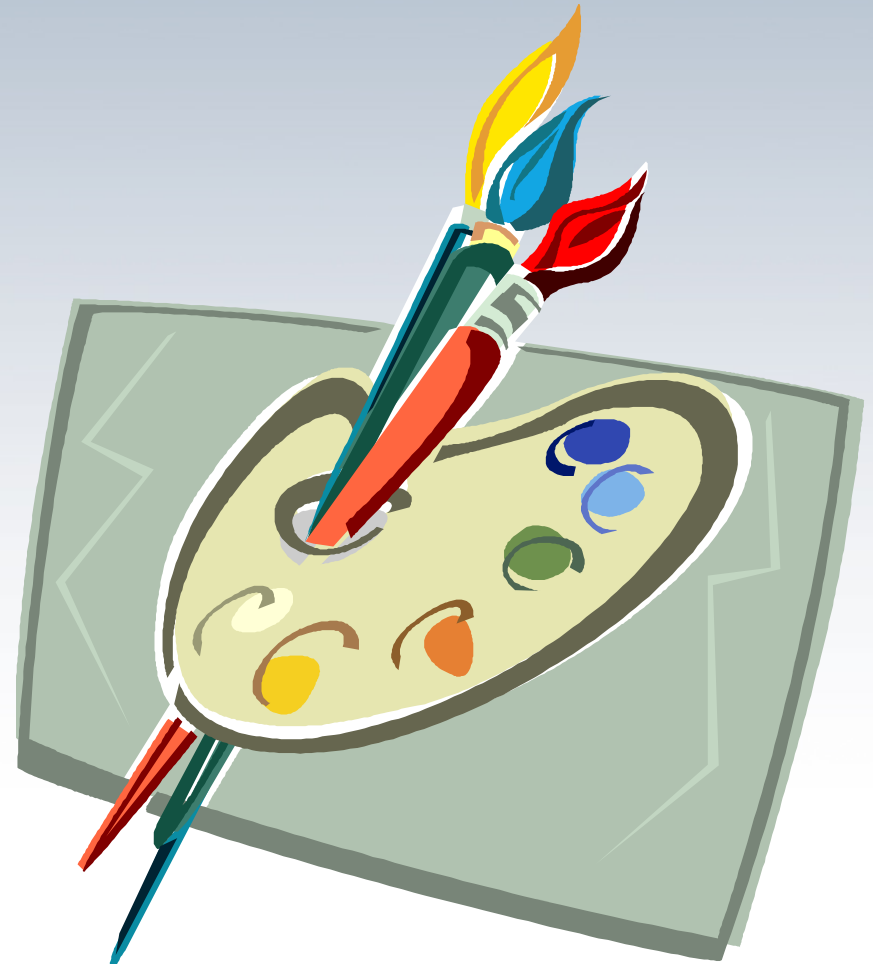
Parent Involvement and Engagement in the School

- Volunteers
- Decision makers
- Contribute to the curriculum
- Co-teachers
- Close relationships with the teachers
- Supports project work and documentation



Integration of the Arts

- Music and movement
- Songs and poetry
- Drama
- Creativity
- The arts:
 - Painting
 - Drawing
 - Representation of many forms



Conversation

- Explore concepts that you could use in your setting.
 - Parent involvement
 - Documentation
 - Staff development
 - Learning environments
 - Curriculum



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